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R.F.E. AND HUNGARY

To the Editor: We find it impossible to believe that Béla Kovács had Radio Free Europe in mind when he spoke of "reactionaries," "feudalists," "fascists," and "men who are marked because of their war crimes" in the passage quoted by Leslie B. Bain in "Budapest: Interview in a Basement Hide-away" (*The Reporter*, December 13).

The writers, editors, and broadcasters with R.F.E.'s Voice of Free Hungary include no one in any of such categories, nor has R.F.E. ever broadcast to Hungary programs that by any stretch of imagination could be classified as "White reaction," whatever the precise meaning may be.

A large number of R.F.E.'s Hungarian personnel were members of Béla Kovács's own Independent Smallholders Party, and many of them were close personal friends as well as political colleagues and admirers of this fine and decent Hungarian leader.

In the circumstances it is impossible to verify Mr. Bain's quotes, but we would like to ask him this question: Who are some of these undesirable Hungarians employed by R.F.E.? Did he ask Mr. Kovács to identify them?

The fact is that the individual political beliefs of members of R.F.E.'s Hungarian staff range from conservative to liberal. Neither the extreme Right nor the extreme Left of the political spectrum is represented. Furthermore, R.F.E. broadcasts do not advocate the cause of particular individuals or parties in or out of Hungary. We support simply the right of the Hungarian people to select, through free elections, their own form of government.

It may be relevant to note that for six years the U.S.S.R., in concert with its worldwide Soviet bloc, has hurled at R.F.E. the charges of "fascist," "reactionary," "war criminals," "feudalists," etc., in an endeavor to put R.F.E. out of business.

W. J. CONVERY EGAN
Director
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Mr. Bain replies:

I have read Mr. Egan's letter with interest and I am sorry for not being able to give him a detailed answer. Neither Kovács nor other Hungarian revolutionary figures spoke of Radio Free Europe in terms of personalities. I am sure Kovács knows nothing of the organization and its personnel. The views expressed to me by Hungarians were

based on Radio Free Europe's performance before, during, and after the revolution.

Specifically, R.F.E.'s efforts to undermine the stability of Nagy's government, question its honesty, and influence the population to make impossible demands on it were considered detestable by the revolutionary leaders.

I am surprised that Mr. Egan finds it necessary to defend Radio Free Europe with Soviet hostility to it. The relevancy of Soviet charges against R.F.E. may be apparent to Mr. Egan but escapes me when juxtaposed with Kovács's remarks.

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